

VZCZCXRO2480
OO RUEHBI RUEHLMC
DE RUEHLM #0787 1521035
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 011035Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6169
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0436
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0157
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7138
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5243
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3793
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1037
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3865
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1098
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2948
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7729
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5391
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0219
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2088
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000787

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS
MCC FOR S GROFF, D TETER, D NASSIRY AND E BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TAMIL HOSTEL OWNERS TOLD TO EXPEL ALL
OCCUPANTS

REF: A. COLOMBO 753

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 768

Classified By: A/DCM Michael DeTar for reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) At approximately 5:30 p.m. on May 31, a local holiday, police in the central Colombo business district of Pettah summoned more than 60 Tamil hostel owners and ordered them to expel all occupants from their lodging that night. The police warned that they would do so forcibly the next morning if the hostel owners failed to comply. About two hours later, Tamil member of Parliament and Deputy Minister of Vocational Training P. Radhakrishnan called President Rajapaksa and threatened to withdraw from the governing coalition unless the order was rescinded. According to Embassy interlocutors, the President promised to look into the matter.

[1](#)2. (C) On the morning of June 1, Defense Spokesman Kehaliya Rambukwella gave a telephone interview to the media in which he claimed that the order only amounted to a prohibition on lodge owners accepting any new Tamil occupants. However, a Tamil journalist told us that the original terms of the order had not changed, but that the deadline was extended until June 1 at noon. This deadline has now passed, and police have as yet taken no action to expel occupants from the hostels. We have reports that five Muslim-owned lodges have voluntarily decided to comply. The situation in Pettah remains tense and the outcome uncertain.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT: After the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) detonated bombs in Pettah on May 24 (ref A) and in the southern Colombo suburb of Ratmalana on May 29 (ref B), the GSL seems intent on finding the perpetrators before they strike again. The several hundred thousand Tamils who live permanently in Colombo are subject to routine questioning and searches at hundreds of checkpoints. In this case, the GSL

has apparently decided that the many Tamils staying temporarily in Colombo pose too great a security risk, and have therefore sought to "evacuate" them back to their homes in the north and east, regardless of their purpose in coming to the city. These tactics can only serve to alienate further an already deeply suspicious minority population. The Tamil community will certainly view this step an overreaction, reinforcing the belief that the GSL sees Tamils as second-class citizens. The howl of protest the order elicited provided a reminder to the President that he depends on some Tamil members of Parliament, along with other minorities and political moderates, for his legislative majority.

BLAKE